

HJS

Docket No. 1267.1013/HJS

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re Application of:

Ian Juso DEDIC et al.

Group Art Unit:

Serial No.:

Examiner:

Filed: August 25, 1999

For: JITTER REDUCTION



**SUBMISSION OF CERTIFIED COPY OF PRIOR  
FOREIGN APPLICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH  
THE REQUIREMENTS OF 37 C.F.R. § 1.55**

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In accordance with the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.55, the applicant(s) submit(s)  
herewith a certified copy of the following foreign application(s):

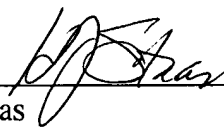
British Patent Application No. 9819414.5  
Filed: September 4, 1998

It is respectfully requested that the applicant(s) be given the benefit of the foreign filing  
date, as evidenced by the certified papers attached hereto, in accordance with the requirements  
of 35 U.S.C. § 119.

Respectfully submitted,  
STAAS & HALSEY LLP

Date: August 25, 1999

By: \_\_\_\_\_

  
H. J. Staas  
Registration No. 22,010

700 Eleventh Street, N.W.  
Suite 500  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Telephone: (202) 434-1500  
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501

**This Page Blank (uspto)**



The  
Patent  
Office



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The Patent Office  
Concept House  
Cardiff Road  
Newport  
South Wales  
NP10 8QQ



## CERTIFIED COPY OF PRIORITY DOCUMENT

I, the undersigned, being an officer duly authorised in accordance with Section 74(1) and (4) of the Deregulation & Contracting Out Act 1994, to sign and issue certificates on behalf of the Comptroller-General, hereby certify that annexed hereto is a true copy of the documents as originally filed in connection with the patent application identified therein.

In accordance with the Patents (Companies Re-registration) Rules 1982, if a company named in this certificate and any accompanying documents has re-registered under the Companies Act 1980 with the same name as that with which it was registered immediately before re-registration save for the substitution as, or inclusion as, the last part of the name of the words "public limited company" or their equivalents in Welsh, references to the name of the company in this certificate and any accompanying documents shall be treated as references to the name with which it is so re-registered.

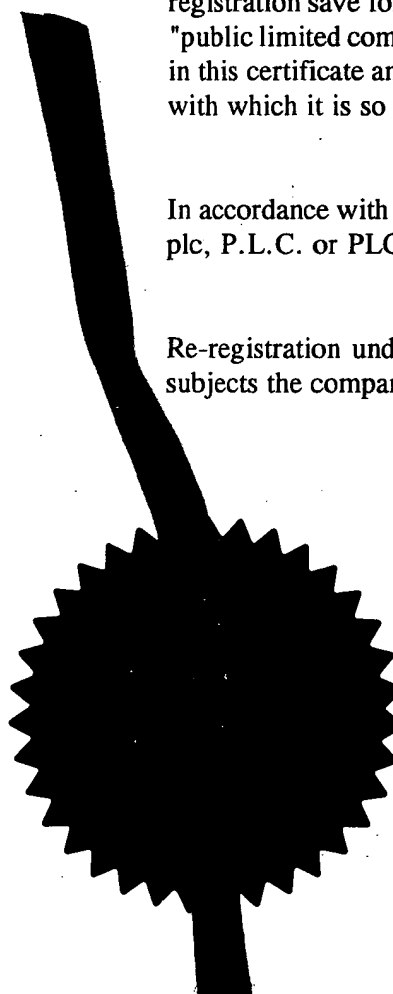
In accordance with the rules, the words "public limited company" may be replaced by p.l.c., plc, P.L.C. or PLC.

Re-registration under the Companies Act does not constitute a new legal entity but merely subjects the company to certain additional company law rules.

Signed

Dated

9th July, 1999



**This Page Blank (uspto)**

Patents Act 1977  
(Rule 15)

Patent  
Office

# Statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road  
Newport  
Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference HL70592/JW

2. Patent application number  
(if you know it)

3. Full name of the or of each applicant Fujitsu Limited

4. Title of the invention

JITTER REDUCTION

5. State how the applicant(s) derived the right  
from the inventor(s) to be granted a patent

The inventors are employed by Fujitsu Microelectronics Limited (FML), a United Kingdom subsidiary of Fujitsu Limited of Japan, and FML and Fujitsu Limited have agreed that this invention shall belong to Fujitsu Limited.

6. How many, if any, additional Patent Forms 7/77 are  
attached to this form? None  
(see note (c))

7. I/We believe that the person(s) named over the page (and on  
any extra copies of this form) is/are the inventor(s) of the invention  
which the above patent application relates to.

Signature

Date

Haseltine Lake & Co. Agents for the Applicants

*Haseltine Lake & Co.*

4 September 1998

8. Name and daytime telephone number of person to  
contact in the United Kingdom

Matthew Hitching

[0171] 420 0500

## Notes

- a) If you need help to fill in this form or you have any questions, please contact the patent office on 0645 500505.
- b) Write your answers in capital letters using black ink or you may type them.
- c) If there are more than three inventors, please write the names and addresses of the other inventors on the back of another Patents Form 7/77 and attach it to this form.
- d) When an application does not declare any priority, or declares priority from an earlier UK application, you must provide enough copies of this form so that the Patent Office can send one to each inventor who is not an applicant.
- e) Once you have filled in the form you must remember to sign and date it.

**This Page Blank (uspto)**

Enter the full names, addresses and postcodes of the inventors in the boxes and underline the surnames

William George John SCHOFIELD  
24 Woodhouse Street  
Park Farm  
Binfield  
Berkshire RG42 4RA  
United Kingdom

0135 553 201

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

Ian Juso DEDIC  
15 Belvue Road  
Northolt  
Middlesex UB5 5HW  
United Kingdom

0378 689 0002

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

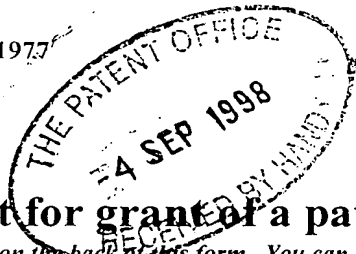
Patents ADP number (if you know it)

**Reminder**  
Have you signed this form?

**This Page Blank (uspto)**



Patent  
(Rule 16)



The  
**Patent  
Office**

07SEP98 E368321-1 002847  
P01/7700 25.00 - 9819414.5

**1/77**

# Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)

**9819414.5**

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road  
Newport  
Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference	HL70592/JW		
2. Patent application number <i>(The Patent Office will fill in this part)</i>			
3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant <i>(underline all surnames)</i>	Fujitsu Limited 1-1, Kamikodanaka 4-chome, Nakahara-ku, Kawasaki-shi, Kanagawa, 211-8588 JAPAN		
Patents ADP number <i>(if you know it)</i>			
If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation			
Japan			
4. Title of the invention			
JITTER REDUCTION			
5. Full name of your agent <i>(if you have one)</i>	Haseltine Lake & Co.		
"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent <i>(including the postcode)</i>	Imperial House 15-19 Kingsway London WC2B 6UD		
Patents ADP number <i>(if you know it)</i>			
34001			
6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and <i>(if you know it)</i> the or each application number	Country	Priority application number <i>(if you know it)</i>	Date of filing <i>(day/month/year)</i>
7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application	Number of earlier application		Date of filing <i>(day/month/year)</i>
8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to a grant of patent required in support of this request? <i>(Answer "Yes" if:</i> a) <i>any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or</i> b) <i>there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or</i> c) <i>any named applicant is a corporate body.</i> See note (d))	Yes		



**This Page Blank (uspto)**



# Patents Form 1/77

9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form. Do not count copies of the same document.

## Continuation sheets of this form

Description	33
Claims(s)	6
Abstract	1
Drawing(s)	8

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

## Priority documents

### Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to a grant of patent (*Patents Form 7/77*) 3

Request for preliminary examination and search (*Patents Form 9/77*) 1

Request for substantive examination (*Patents Form 10/77*)

Any other documents  
(please specify)

11. I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Haseltine Lake & Co. Agents for the Applicants

Signature

Date

*Haseltine Lake & Co.*

4 September 1998

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom Matthew Hitching [0171] 420 0500

## Warning

After an application for a patent has been filed, the Comptroller of the Patent Office will consider whether publication or communication of the invention should be prohibited or restricted under Section 22 of the Patents Act 1977. You will be informed if it is necessary to prohibit or restrict your invention in this way. Furthermore, if you live in the United Kingdom, Section 23 of the Patents Act 1977 stops you from applying for a patent abroad without first getting written permission from the Patent Office unless an application has been filed at least 6 weeks beforehand in the United Kingdom for a patent for the same invention and either no direction prohibiting publication or communication has been given, or any such direction has been revoked.

## Notes

- If you need help to fill in this form or you have any questions, please contact the Patent Office on 0645 500505.
- Write your answers in capital letters using black ink or you may type them.
- If there is not enough space for all the relevant details on any part of this form, please continue on a separate sheet of paper and write "see continuation sheet" in the relevant part(s). Any continuation sheet should be attached to this form.
- If you have answered 'Yes' Patents Form 7/77 will need to be filed.
- Once you have filled in the form you must remember to sign and date it.
- For details of the fee and ways to pay please contact the Patent Office.



**This Page Blank (uspto)**

# JITTER REDUCTION

The present invention relates to jitter reduction techniques for use particularly but not exclusively in mixed-signal circuitry and integrated circuit devices, for example digital-to-analog converters (DACs). Such mixed-signal circuitry and devices include a mixture of digital circuitry and analog circuitry.

Figure 1 of the accompanying drawings shows parts of a conventional DAC integrated circuit (IC) of the so-called "current-steering" type. The DAC 1 is designed to convert an m-bit digital input word (D1-Dm) into a corresponding analog output signal.

The DAC 1 contains analog circuitry including a plurality (n) of identical current sources  $2_1$  to  $2_n$ , where  $n=2^m-1$ . Each current source 2 passes a substantially constant current I. The analog circuitry further includes a plurality of differential switching circuits  $4_1$  to  $4_n$  corresponding respectively to the n current sources  $2_1$  to  $2_n$ . Each differential switching circuit 4 is connected to its corresponding current source 2 and switches the current I produced by the current source either to a first terminal, connected to a first connection line A of the converter, or a second terminal connected to a second connection line B of the converter.

Each differential switching circuit 4 receives one of a plurality of digital control signals T1 to Tn (called "thermometer-coded signals" for reasons explained hereinafter) and selects either its first terminal or its second terminal in accordance with the value of the signal concerned. A first output current  $I_A$  of the DAC 1 is the sum of the respective currents delivered to the differential-switching-circuit first terminals, and a second output current  $I_B$  of the DAC 1 is the sum of the respective currents delivered to the differential-switching-circuit second terminals.

The analog output signal is the voltage difference  $V_A - V_B$  between a voltage  $V_A$  produced by sinking the first output current  $I_A$  of the DAC 1 into a resistance  $R$  and a voltage  $V_B$  produced by sinking the second output current  $I_B$  of the converter into another resistance  $R$ .

In the Figure 1 DAC the thermometer-coded signals  $T_1$  to  $T_n$  are derived from the binary input word  $D_1$ - $D_m$  by digital circuitry including a binary-thermometer decoder 6. The decoder 6 operates as follows.

When the binary input word  $D_1$ - $D_m$  has the lowest value the thermometer-coded signals  $T_1$ - $T_n$  are such that each of the differential switching circuits  $4_1$  to  $4_n$  selects its second terminal so that all of the current sources  $2_1$  to  $2_n$  are connected to the second connection line B. In this state,  $V_A = 0$  and  $V_B = nIR$ . The analog output signal  $V_A - V_B = -nIR$ .

As the binary input word  $D_1$ - $D_m$  increases progressively in value, the thermometer-coded signals  $T_1$  to  $T_n$  produced by the decoder 6 are such that more of the differential switching circuits select their respective first terminals (starting from the differential switching circuit  $4_1$ ) without any differential switching circuit that has already selected its first terminal switching back to its second terminal. When the binary input word  $D_1$ - $D_m$  has the value  $i$ , the first  $i$  differential switching circuits  $4_1$  to  $4_i$  select their respective first terminals, whereas the remaining  $n-i$  differential switching circuits  $4_{i+1}$  to  $4_n$  select their respective second terminals. The analog output signal  $V_A - V_B$  is equal to  $(2i-n)IR$ .

Figure 2 shows an example of the thermometer-coded signals generated for a three-bit binary input word  $D_1$ - $D_3$  (i.e. in this example  $m=3$ ). In this case, seven thermometer-coded signals  $T_1$  to  $T_7$  are required ( $n=2^m$  -

1 = 7).

As Figure 2 shows, the thermometer-coded signals T1 to Tn generated by the binary-thermometer decoder 6 follow a so-called thermometer code in which it is known that when an rth-order signal Tr is activated (set to "1"), all of the lower-order signals T1 to Tr-1 will also be activated.

Thermometer coding is popular in DACs of the current-steering type because, as the binary input word increases, more current sources are switched to the first connection line A without any current source that is already switched to that line A being switched to the other line B. Accordingly, the input/output characteristic of the DAC is monotonic and the glitch impulse resulting from a change of 1 in the input word is small.

However, when it is desired to operate such a DAC at very high speeds (for example 100MHz or more), it is found that glitches may occur at one or both of the first and second connection lines A and B, producing a momentary error in the DAC analog output signal  $V_A - V_B$ . These glitches in the analog output signal may be code-dependent and result in harmonic distortion or even non-harmonic spurs in the output spectrum.

The present inventors have investigated the causes of these glitches, and have determined some of the causes to be as follows.

Firstly, the digital circuitry (the binary-thermometer decoder 6 and other digital circuits) is required to switch very quickly and its gate count is quite high. Accordingly, the current consumption of the digital circuitry could be as much as 20mA per 100MHz at high operating speeds. This combination of fast switching and high current consumption inevitably introduces a high degree of noise into the power supply lines. Although it has previously been considered to

separate the power supplies for the analog circuitry (e.g. the current sources  $2_1$  to  $2_n$  and differential switching circuits  $4_1$  to  $4_n$  in Figure 1) from the power supplies for the digital circuitry, this measure alone is not found to be wholly satisfactory when the highest performance levels are required. In particular, noise arising from the operation of the binary-thermometer decoder 6 can lead to skew in the timing of the changes in the thermometer-coded signals  $T_1$  to  $T_n$  in response to different changes in the digital input word  $D_1$  to  $D_m$ . For example, it is estimated that the skew may be several hundreds of picoseconds. This amount of skew causes significant degradation of the performance of the DAC and, moreover, being data-dependent, the degradation is difficult to predict.

Secondly, in order to reduce the skew problem mentioned above, it may be considered to provide a set of latch circuits, corresponding respectively to the thermometer-coded signals  $T_1$  to  $T_n$ , between the digital circuitry and the analog circuitry, which latches are activated by a common timing signal such that the outputs thereof change simultaneously. However, surprisingly it is found that this measure alone is not wholly effective in removing skew from the thermometer-coded signals. It is found, for example, that data-dependent jitter still remains at the outputs of the latch circuits and that the worst-case jitter increases in approximate proportion to the number of thermometer-coded signals. Thus, with (say) 64 thermometer-coded signals the worst-case jitter may be as much as 20 picoseconds which, when high performance is demanded, is excessively large.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided digital circuitry, operative repetitively to perform a series of processing cycles, comprising: input signal processing



means operable in each cycle to perform a predetermined processing operation on one or more input signals received by the circuitry to derive therefrom one or more first signals, the said predetermined processing operation being commenced in response to a first clock signal; first clocked means switchable, by application thereto of a second clock signal, between a responsive state, in which the first clocked means are operable in response to a change in the first signal(s) to change one or more second signals produced thereby, and a non-responsive state in which the second signal(s) do not change; second clocked means switchable, by application thereto of a third clock signal, between a responsive state, in which the second clocked means are operable in response to a change in the second signal(s) to change one or more output signals of the circuitry, and a non-responsive state in which the output signal(s) do not change; and clock generating means for deriving the second and third clock signals from the first clock signal, the second clock signal being delayed relative to the first clock signal by a preselected delay time and the said third clock signal being delayed relative to the first clock signal by less than the said preselected delay time such that in each cycle the first clocked means enter the said non-responsive state before the end of the said predetermined processing operation, and the said second clocked means enter the said responsive state when the first clocked means are in the said non-responsive state.

In such digital circuitry, by making the second clock signal have the preselected delay time relative to the first clock signal the setup time of the first clocked means can be maximised for a given duration of the predetermined processing operation. Even though the second clock signal introduces jitter dependent upon the preselected delay time, the or each output

signal of the circuitry suffers only a lower degree of jitter dependent upon the delay, relative to the first clock signal, of the third clock signal which is less than the preselected delay time. Accordingly, the jitter performance of the circuitry is improved without reducing its speed of operation. The output signal(s) can be applied to any timing-sensitive circuit to cause that circuit to undergo a predetermined operation at a well-defined instant in time.

Preferably the third clock signal has no or no substantial delay relative to the said first clock signal. In this case the jitter performance is improved remarkably to a level equivalent to that of comparable digital circuitry not including a means of delaying the first clock signal, whilst still achieving the maximum clock rate possible when the delay means are present. The third clock signal can even be one and the same signal as the first clock signal, at least when the second clocked means are of the edge-triggered type.

The preselected delay time may be chosen such that the said first clocked means enter the said non-responsive state at least a predetermined hold time before the end of the said predetermined processing operation, which predetermined hold time is the minimum period for which the or each first signal must remain stable after the first clocked means enter the said non-responsive state. This means that the longest possible setup time is available for the first clocked means. As the minimum hold time is tending to zero or negative for modern clocked elements the predetermined hold time can be zero or a very small value.

In practice, the predetermined processing operation may vary in duration from one cycle to the next, for example in dependence upon the change in the input signals from one cycle to the next. In this

case, the preselected delay time is chosen to ensure that at least the minimum hold time is obtained before the end of the shortest-possible-duration operation.

When plural circuit units (each including the first and second clocked means as well as at least parts of the input signal processing means) the preselected delay time may be chosen such that the said first clocked means of each circuit unit enter the said non-responsive state at least the above-mentioned predetermined hold time before the end of the said predetermined processing operation in the circuit unit having the fastest input signal processing means. This enables skew in the production of valid first signals amongst the different circuit units to be accommodated. The maximum clock rate of the circuitry is then only really limited by the skew itself, as the minimum setup and hold times of the first clocked means are zero or very small.

In one embodiment the said clock generating means are such that a predetermined enabling change (e.g. a rising edge) in the said third clock signal, which change causes the second clocked means to change from the said non-responsive state to the said responsive state, occurs substantially simultaneously with one of the changes in the said first clock signal, preferably a predetermined enabling change (e.g. a rising edge) in that signal which causes the said predetermined processing operation to commence. A predetermined disabling change (e.g. falling edge) in the third clock signal, which change causes the second clocked means to change from the said responsive state to the said non-responsive state, can then be delayed substantially relative to one of the changes in the first clock signal, without adversely affecting the jitter performance, because until after that disabling change the first clocked means is in the non-responsive state

so that the or each second signal is stable.

Advantageously the clock generating means may include: delay means for delaying the first clock signal to produce a delayed version thereof; and logic means for logically combining the first clock signal with the said delayed version thereof such that the said enabling change in the third clock signal is substantially simultaneous with the said enabling change in the said first clock signal, and the said disabling change in the third clock signal is substantially simultaneous with one of the changes in the said delayed version of the first clock signal. The use of such combinatorial logic means (e.g. a simple NAND gate) can enable the third clock signal to be generated simply and, in view of the low propagation delay of combinatorial logic circuitry, without introducing any significant jitter.

The said clock generating means may also further include delay balancing means connected between the said delay means and the said first clocked means for receiving the said delayed version of the first clock signal and for deriving therefrom the said second clock signal. These delay balancing means are designed to have a first propagation delay, between the said one change in the delayed version of the first clock signal and a predetermined enabling change in the said second clock signal, which change causes the first clocked means to change from the said non-responsive state to the said responsive state. This first propagation delay is designed to be substantially equal to a second propagation delay, of the said logic means, between the said one change in the said delayed version and the said disabling change in the third clock signal. The delay balancing means can have, for example, the same elements as the logic means itself, so as to guarantee equality of the first and second propagation delays.

If the logic means is a NAND gate the delay balancing means can also be a NAND gate connected for example to simply invert the delayed version of the first clock signal to produce the second clock signal.

5       By using such delay balancing means it can be ensured that the enabling change in the second clock signal cannot occur before the disabling change in the third clock signal, which would lead to a direct path from the output of the input signal processing means to  
10       the output signals of the circuitry in the case in which one or both of the clocked means is/are of the transparent type.

      The input signal processing means in one embodiment include further clocked means switchable, by  
15       application thereto of the said first clock signal, between a responsive state, in which the said further clocked means are operable in response to a change in the said input signal(s) to change one or more basic signals produced thereby, and a non-responsive state in  
20       which the basic signal(s) do not change; and signal processing means for deriving the said one or more first signals from the basic signal(s). In this construction the further clocked means serve to provide stable inputs to the signal processing circuitry at the  
25       start of the predetermined processing operation. The signal processing circuitry may be, for example, binary-to-thermometer decoding circuitry.

      Each clocked means can be of any suitable type (edge-triggered or transparent) but preferably the  
30       first and further clocked means each include a full latch element (e.g. D-type element) and the second clocked means include a transparent half latch element. The use of the full latches simplifies the timing requirements for the various clock signals because the  
35       full latches only enter the responsive state at an actual clock edge. On the other hand the half latch in

the second clocked means is advantageous in reducing the number of transistors drawing current when the second clocked means transition. It is possible, for example, to provide a special (independent) power supply for the section of the circuitry including the second clocked means so as to reduce jitter in the second clocked means arising from power supply fluctuations in the circuitry as a whole. In this case it is particularly useful to reduce the power drawn from the separate supply provided for the section of the circuitry including the second clocked means.

The said first signals and/or the said second signals and/or the said third signals and/or the said output signals may be complementary signal pairs and/or thermometer-coded signals. This reduces the power supply fluctuations (and hence jitter) associated with transitions in these signals.

When plural circuit units are provided, each circuit unit including such input signal processing means and such first clocked means and such second clocked means, it also helps in reducing jitter to make some parts of the clock generating means common to all units with other parts thereof provided for the units individually or in small groups. For example, the clock generating means may include: a global clock generator provided in common for all the said circuit units and operable to produce a basic clock signal; and a plurality of local clock drivers, each corresponding to one or more of the said circuit units, and each being connected to the global clock generator for receiving therefrom the said basic clock signal and being operable to derive therefrom a unique such third clock signal for application to the said second clocked means in the or each of its said one or more corresponding circuit units. This construction is advantageous because it is found that the clock

distribution line or lines connecting the global clock generator to the individual local clock buffers is/are affected much less by changes of state in the second clocked means when the local clock buffers are provided.

Ideally, each said circuit unit has its own individually-corresponding one of the said local clock drivers.

Preferably the said global clock generator is operable to produce respective mutually-complementary such basic clock signals which are applied in common to all of the said local clock drivers of the said plurality. In this case two clock distribution lines are used which undergo complementary changes so reducing the effect of parasitic capacitances associated with these relatively long lines.

The power supplies of at least some critical parts (e.g. the second clocked means and/or the local clock buffer) of the different circuit units are preferably decoupled from one another to further reduce jitter.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided mixed-signal circuitry including: digital circuitry embodying the aforesaid first aspect of the present invention; and analog circuitry connected to the said digital circuitry for receiving therefrom the said one or more output signals and operable to produce one or more analog signals in dependence upon the received output signal(s).

In such mixed-signal circuitry the analog circuitry receives reduced-jitter (or even entirely-jitter-free) output signals from the digital circuitry, greatly reducing glitches in the produced analog signals. The improvement is particularly significant when the mixed-signal circuitry has plural circuit units ("cells") which each have timing-sensitive analog circuits that must all operate together at a single

well-defined instant or at staggered but well-defined instants.

The mixed-signal circuitry may be (or include) a digital-to-analog converter or a mixer.

5 For example the analog circuitry may include a plurality of current sources or current sinks and a plurality of switch circuits connected to the current sources/sinks for performing predetermined switching operations in dependence upon the said output signal(s) so as to produce the said one or more analog signals.

10 Advantageously, power is supplied to the said analog circuitry independently of the power supplied to the or each said second clocked means and (if supplied separately) to the other parts of the digital circuitry. In this way the analog circuitry can be isolated from the effects of transitions in the digital circuitry.

Reference will now be made, by way of example, to the accompanying drawings, in which:

20 Figure 1, discussed hereinbefore, shows parts of a conventional DAC IC;

Figure 2, also discussed hereinbefore, presents a table showing thermometer-coded signals derived from a binary input word;

25 Figure 3 shows parts of a DAC IC to which an embodiment of the present invention can be applied;

Figure 4 shows parts of digital circuitry previously considered for use in the Figure 3 DAC IC;

30 Figures 5A and 5B show respective timing diagrams for use in explaining operation of the Figure 4 circuitry;

Figure 6 shows parts of digital circuitry embodying the present invention;

35 Figures 7A and 7B show respective timing diagrams for use in explaining operation of the Figure 6 circuitry;



Figure 8 shows in more detail than Figure 6 parts of a latch section of the Figure 6 digital circuitry; and

5 Figure 9 shows a circuit diagram of an analog circuit suitable for use in a DAC IC embodying the present invention.

10 Figure 3 shows parts of a DAC IC embodying the present invention. The Figure 3 circuitry is divided into three sections: a digital section, a latch section and an analog section. The latch section is interposed between the digital and analog sections.

15 The digital section comprises decoder circuitry 10, which is connected to other digital circuitry (not shown) to receive an m-bit digital input word D1~Dm. The decoder circuitry 10 has an output stage made up of n digital circuits DC1 to DCn which produce respectively thermometer-coded signals T1 to Tn based on the digital input word, for example in accordance with the table of Figure 2 discussed hereinbefore.

20 The latch section comprises a set 12 of n latch circuits L1 to Ln. Each latch circuit is connected to receive an individually-corresponding one of the thermometer-coded signals T1 to Tn produced by the decoder circuitry 10. Each latch circuit L1 to Ln also receives a clock signal CLK. The latch circuits L1 to Ln produce at their outputs respective clocked thermometer signals TCK1 to TCKn that correspond respectively to the thermometer-coded signals T1 to Tn produced by the decoder circuitry 10.

30 In each cycle of the DAC IC a new sample of the digital input word D1~Dm is taken and so the thermometer-coded signals T1 to Tn normally change from one cycle to the next. In each cycle, it inevitably takes a finite time for these signals to settle to their intended final values from the moment the new sample is taken. Also, inevitably some digital

35

circuits DC1 to DCn will produce their respective thermometer-coded signals earlier than others. By virtue of the clocked operation of the latch circuits L1 to Ln, the clocked thermometer signals TCK1 to TCKn can be prevented from changing until all the thermometer-coded signals T1 to Tn have settled to their intended values for a particular cycle of the DAC.

The analog section comprises a set 14 of n analog circuits AC1 to ACn. Each of the analog circuits AC1 to ACn receives an individually-corresponding one of the clocked thermometer signals TCK1 to TCKn. The analog circuits AC1 to ACn each have one or more analog output terminals and signals produced at the analog output terminals are combined appropriately to produce one or more analog output signals. For example, currents may be summed by summing connection lines as in Figure 1. Two such analog output signals OUTA and OUTB are shown in Figure 3 by way of example.

In the Figure 3 circuitry, each digital circuit DC1 to DCn, together with its corresponding latch circuit L1 to Ln and its corresponding analog circuit AC1 to ACn, constitutes a so-called "cell" of the DAC. Thus, each cell includes a digital circuit DC, a latch circuit L and an analog circuit AC. The digital circuit DC produces a first digital signal (thermometer-coded signal) T for its cell. The latch circuit for the cell receives the first digital signal T and delivers to the analog circuit AC of the cell a second digital signal (clocked thermometer signal) TCK corresponding to the first digital signal T once the first digital signals of all cells have settled to their final intended values. Thus, the latch circuit serves as a signal control circuit for deriving the second digital signal from the first digital signal and controlling the timing of its application to the analog

circuit AC. The second digital signal TCK serves as a control signal for use in controlling a predetermined operation of the analog circuit AC of the cell. This predetermined operation may be any suitable type of operation of the cell. For example, it could be a switching or selection operation for switching on or off, or controlling the output path of, an analog output signal of the cell. An example of the analog circuit AC of a cell is given later with reference to Figure 9.

As shown in Figure 3, each section of the circuitry (digital, latch and analog) has its own independent power supply connections, for example a positive power supply potential VDD and a negative power supply potential or electrical ground GND. Thus, the digital section has a DIGITAL VDD and a DIGITAL GND; the latch section has a LATCH VDD and a LATCH GND; and the analog section has an ANALOG VDD and ANALOG GND. These different VDD and GND supplies are received at different respective power supply pins of the DAC IC (chip). Thus, if desired the potentials of the supplies to each section can be different from one another. Typically, however, for convenience a single power supply will be used off-chip to provide the power supplies for each of the different sections, and a circuit board on which the chip is mounted will contain suitable circuitry for delivering the different power supplies to the appropriate power supply pins of the chip whilst decoupling the different supplies from one another using inductance and capacitance elements in known manner.

Within the integrated circuit itself, there are a number of ways in which coupling between the power supplies of the three different sections can be prevented. Details of these are provided in our co-pending United Kingdom Patent Application No.

9804587.5.

Figure 4 shows circuitry previously considered for inclusion in (or use in association with) one of the cells. As shown in Figure 4, the circuitry is divided into respective digital, latch and analog sections as in Figure 3. The digital section includes an input latch 20 connected for receiving the digital input word D1~Dm. The input latch 20 also receives a clock signal DIGCLK which is, for example, applied externally to the DAC IC. The input latch 20 may be of the positive edge-triggered D-type, for example.

The Figure 4 circuitry also comprises respective global and local decoders 22 and 24 which correspond to parts of the decoder 10 in Figure 3. The global decoder 22 receives the input word D1~Dm (or parts thereof) from the latch 20 and decodes it into two or more sets (or dimensions) of thermometer-coded signals (referred to as row and column signals, or row, column and depth signals). These two or more sets of signals are delivered to a plurality of local decoders which correspond respectively to the cells. Only one of these local decoders is shown in Figure 4. Each local decoder only needs to receive and decode a small number (2 or 3) of the signals in the sets produced by the global decoder. The local decoders can be regarded as arranged logically (not necessarily physically as well) in two or more dimensions corresponding respectively to the sets of thermometer-coded signals. The local decoders are effectively addressed by the sets of thermometer-coded signals and, using simple combinatorial logic, derive respective "local" thermometer-coded signals T for their respective cells.

Thus, in Figure 4 the particular local decoder 24 is connected to receive a small number (represented schematically by respective row, column and depth signals R, C, D) of the signals in the sets of row,

column and depth signals produced by the global decoder 22. The local decoder 24 derives the complementary thermometer-coded signals  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  for its particular cell based on the received  $R$ ,  $C$  and  $D$  signals. Further details of such "two-stage" thermometer-decoding involving global and local decoders may be found, for example, in our co-pending United Kingdom Patent Application No. 9800384.1.

The latch section of the Figure 4 circuitry comprises a cell latch 26 which is of the differential type having its two data inputs connected respectively to the outputs of the local decoder 24 for receiving therefrom the thermometer-coded complementary output signals  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$ . The cell latch 26 is of the positive edge-triggered D-type, for example, and receives at its clock input a clock signal  $ANCLK$ . The  $ANCLK$  signal is derived from the externally-applied  $DIGCLK$  signal by a delay element 28 which imposes a nominally-fixed delay  $\Delta_1$  on the received  $DIGCLK$  signal.

The outputs of the cell latch 26 produce respective complementary clocked thermometer-coded signals  $TCK$  and  $\overline{TCK}$  corresponding respectively to the  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  signals.

The analog section of the Figure 4 circuitry comprises a current switch 30 having complementary inputs connected to the outputs of the cell latch 26 for receiving therefrom the clocked thermometer signals  $TCK$  and  $\overline{TCK}$ .

Operation of the Figure 4 circuitry will now be described with reference to Figures 5A and 5B.

The Figure 4 circuitry operates in a pipeline manner, based on successive cycles of the  $DIGCLK$  clock signal. Each cycle commences at the rising edge of the  $DIGCLK$  signal. Thus, as shown in Figure 5A, a cycle  $i-1$  ends, and the next cycle  $i$  begins, at the first rising edge of the  $DIGCLK$  signal in Figure 5A. Cycle  $i$

ends, and the next cycle  $i+1$  begins, at the second rising edge of the DIGCLK signal in Figure 5A.

The input latch 20 is triggered at the start of each cycle (by the rising edge of DIGCLK) so that the output thereof changes a propagation time  $t_{ckq}$  after the start of the cycle. The global and local decoders 22 and 24 operate in response to the change in the outputs of the first latch 20, the global decoder 22 having a propagation time  $t_{gd}$  and the local decoder 24 having a propagation time  $t_{ld}$ . Thus, the complementary outputs  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  of the local decoders 24 change a combined propagation time  $t_{ckq} + t_{gd} + t_{ld}$  after the start of the cycle. There is inevitably some variation, or skew, between the times at which the local decoders 24 of the different cells have their  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  signals ready. Thus, as shown in Figure 5A, it is only known that the  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  signals for a particular local decoder 24 will change within a data transition period commencing when the fastest local decoder 24 has its  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  signals ready and ending when the slowest local decoder 24 has its  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  signals ready.

The cell latch 26 must not be triggered during the data transition period as the signals  $T$  and  $\bar{T}$  are not known and stable at this time. Furthermore, in common with all types of clocked device, the cell latch 26 has a minimum setup time and a minimum hold time. Input data must be present and stable from at least the minimum setup time before the triggering clock edge until at least the minimum hold time after that edge for proper operation. In Figure 5A, the actual setup and hold times are denoted  $\Delta_3$  and  $\Delta_2$  respectively.

The delay time  $\Delta_1$  imposed on the DIGCLK signal by the delay element 28 is chosen to guarantee that the rising edge of the ANCLK signal occurs the minimum hold time before the data transition period in each cycle. The minimum hold time for most modern D-type latches is

tending to 0, but it may be desirable to include some margin in  $\Delta_2$ . In other words,

$$\Delta_1 = (t_{ckq} + t_{gd} + t_{ld}) - \Delta_2$$

5

By delaying the ANCLK-signal rising edge in this way, the actual setup time  $\Delta_3$  is increased by  $\Delta_1$  (at the expense of the hold time) because, as is apparent from Figure 5A, the T and  $\bar{T}$  signals produced in cycle i are not entered into the latch until the early part of the next cycle i+1.

10

It can be seen from Figure 5A that the total cycle time (i.e. the period of the ANCLK signal or of the DIGCLK signal) is equal to  $\Delta_2$  + the data transition period +  $\Delta_3$ . Thus, it is possible to increase the clock rate (i.e. decrease the cycle time) by "squeezing" the setup time  $\Delta_3$ , as shown in Figure 5B. This is possible because the setup time is also tending to 0 in modern D-type latches. The maximum clock rate is therefore only limited by the minimum setup time + the data transition period + the minimum hold time of the cell latch 26. In practice, with setup and hold times becoming smaller, the skew of the T and  $\bar{T}$  signals (i.e. the data transition period) is the practical limitation on clock rate.

15

20

25

30

35

Although the Figure 4 circuitry is effective in achieving high clock rates, it has the disadvantage that, because the clock signal ANCLK for the second latch 26 is produced by delaying the DIGCLK signal, undesirable jitter is inevitably introduced into the TCK and  $\bar{TCK}$  signals by the cell latch 26. This jitter arises because the delay time  $\Delta_1$  is not constant but varies in accordance with power supply fluctuations, noise and parasitic signals generated elsewhere in the circuitry, etc. The amount of jitter is essentially proportional to the magnitude of the delay time  $\Delta_1$ .

which is, in turn, determined by the propagation times of the input latch 20 and the global and local decoders 22 and 24. Since  $\Delta_1$  may be as large as several hundred picoseconds, the resulting jitter may be as large as 30 picoseconds.

A further disadvantage of the Figure 4 circuitry is that the cell latch 26 is triggered whilst the global and local decoders are transitioning, further increasing jitter. This jitter may be significant, as every cell has a cell latch 26. In particular, the latch section of the circuitry has a full latch (the latch 26) per cell, drawing a large spike of current at every rising edge of the ANCLK signal, which will resonate with the bond wires of the power supplies for the latch section, increasing timing jitter.

Figure 6 shows circuitry in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. In Figure 6, elements which correspond to elements described previously with reference to Figure 4 are denoted by the same reference numerals as in Figure 4.

In Figure 6, the digital section comprises, as in the Figure 4 circuitry, the input latch 20, the global decoder 22 and the local decoder 24. However, the digital section in the Figure 6 cell circuitry further comprises a first cell latch 26 which corresponds to the cell latch 26 in the latch section of the Figure 4 circuitry. The first latch 26 in this embodiment has mutually-complementary clock inputs for receiving complementary clock signals CLK2 and  $\overline{\text{CLK2}}$ . Mutually-complementary clocked thermometer-signals TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  are delivered at the outputs of the first latch 26, as in the Figure 4 circuitry.

The Figure 6 circuitry has, in the latch section, a second cell latch 32 which is preferably a transparent half latch (although a full edge-triggered latch could be used instead). The second latch 32 has mutually-complementary inputs connected to the outputs



of the first latch 26 for receiving the clocked thermometer signals TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  therefrom.

The second latch 32 also has mutually-complementary clock inputs which are connected for receiving mutually-complementary clock signals CLK3 and  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$ . Mutually-complementary thermometer signals TS and  $\overline{\text{TS}}$  for application to a current switch 30 in the analog section are delivered at the outputs of the second latch 32. The second latch 32 is transparent when the clock signal CLK3 is at the high (H) logic level.

The Figure 6 circuitry further comprises clock generating circuitry 34 for generating the clock signals CLK2/ $\overline{\text{CLK2}}$  and CLK3/ $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$ . The clock generating circuitry 34 includes the delay element 28 of the Figure 4 circuitry. The clock generating circuitry 34 further includes a first inverter 36, respective first and second NAND gates 38 and 40 and respective first and second drivers 42 and 44. Each of the drivers 42 and 44 is a buffer with mutually-complementary outputs.

The delay element 28 receives an externally-applied DIGCLK signal via the first inverter 36. Thus, at the output of the delay element 28 a delayed clock signal CLK1 is produced that is inverted and delayed by the delay time  $\Delta_1$  relative to the externally-applied clock signal DIGCLK. This delayed clock signal CLK1 is delivered to one input of each of the NAND gates 38 and 40. The other input of the first NAND gate 38 is tied permanently to the high logic level H. The output of the first NAND gate 38 is received by the first driver 42 which buffers the output to produce the CLK2 signal and inverts the output to produce the  $\overline{\text{CLK2}}$  signal.

The second input of the second NAND gate 40 is connected to receive the DIGCLK signal. The output of the second NAND gate 40 is received by the second

driver 44 which produces the CLK3 signal by inverting that output and produces the  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  signal by buffering that output (i.e. the opposite operation to that of the first driver 42).

5           Operation of the Figure 6 circuitry will now be described with reference to Figure 7A and 7B which relate respectively to low-speed and high-speed clock rates.

10           Referring firstly to Figure 7A, the circuitry of Figure 6 again operates in a pipeline manner, with successive cycles starting on each rising edge of the DIGCLK signal. As in the Figure 4 circuitry, the respective propagation times  $t_{\text{ckq}}$ ,  $t_{\text{gd}}$  and  $t_{\text{ld}}$  of the input latch 20, the global decoder 22 and the local  
15           decoder 24 combine to produce a delay before the outputs T and  $\bar{T}$  of the local decoder 24 change in response to the acceptance (at the rising edge of DIGCLK) of a new input word D1-Dm for the cycle. Generally, there is a data transition period from the  
20           time at which the fastest cell produces valid T and  $\bar{T}$  signals to the time at which the slowest cell produces such valid signals.

          The first latch 26, now in the digital section, is triggered at the rising edge of the CLK2 signal in each  
25           cycle. Because the second input of the first NAND gate 38 is tied permanently to the H level, that gate simply functions as an inverter, so that CLK2 is an inverted version of the CLK1 signal. Thus, referring back to Figure 5A, the CLK2 signal simply corresponds to the  
30           ANCLK signal in the Figure 4 circuitry. Thus, as in the Figure 4 circuitry, the outputs TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  of the first latch 26 do not change until a time  $\Delta_1$  after the start of the next cycle after the cycle in which the new input word was accepted. Thus, in Figure 7A, the  
35           transition in cycle i of the TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  signals represents the result of processing the input word

accepted at the beginning of the preceding cycle  $i-1$ .

The second latch 32 is controlled by the clock signals CLK3 and  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  applied thereto by the second driver 44. The CLK3 signal becomes H when the DIGCLK and CLK1 signals are both high simultaneously. This occurs for the period  $\Delta_1$  at the beginning of each cycle. Accordingly, the second latch 32 is transparent for this period  $\Delta_1$  at the start of each cycle, and is in the non-transparent (holding) state for the remainder of the cycle.

As is apparent from Figure 7A, the second latch 32 is no longer transparent in each cycle by the time that the outputs TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  of the first latch 26 undergo their transitions. Accordingly, these transitions are not registered by the latch 32 until the beginning of the following cycle when CLK3 rises. This means that the new input word accepted in cycle  $i-1$  does not cause the outputs TS and  $\overline{\text{TS}}$  of the second latch to change until the start of the next-but-one cycle  $i+1$ .

In the Figure 6 circuitry, the outputs TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  of the first latch 26 are subject to jitter arising from operation of the delay element 28 in exactly the same way as in the Figure 4 circuitry. However, this jitter does not affect the outputs TS and  $\overline{\text{TS}}$  of the second latch 32, for reasons that will now be explained. The second latch 32 becomes transparent on the rising edge of the CLK3 signal. The time that this signal rises is determined not by the operation of the delay element 28 but by the rise of the DIGCLK signal for each cell. Only the time at which the CLK3 signal falls is determined by the delayed clock signal CLK1 produced by the delay element 28. It therefore follows that there is no or no significant jitter on the rising edge of CLK3.

There is jitter on the rising edge of CLK2 and this inevitably produces jitter in the input signals

TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  of the second latch 32. However, this jitter is of no consequence because the second latch 32 is placed in the holding state before the signals TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  undergo their transitions. Thus, the jitter in these signals does not feed through to the TS and  $\overline{\text{TS}}$  signals. By the time the second latch 32 is made transparent again (at the beginning of the next cycle) the TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  signals have long settled and so are stable at the moment the second latch 32 is made transparent. No jitter occurs at this time because the TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  signals are fixed whilst CLK2 remains low.

In the Figure 6 circuitry,  $\Delta_1$  is determined as in the Figure 4 circuitry to provide sufficient hold time  $\Delta_2$  for the first latch 26 taking into account the propagation times of the elements 20, 22 and 24 preceding it in the digital section. The cycle time is thus equal to the hold time  $\Delta_2$  + the data transition period + the setup time  $\Delta_3$ . As shown in Figure 7B, the setup time  $\Delta_3$  can be reduced when the DIGCLK rate is increased, the maximum clock rate being determined by the sum of the minimum setup and hold times of the first latch 26 and the data transition period. The minimum setup time may be of the order of 100 to 200 picoseconds and the minimum hold time is 0 or possibly even negative. The data transition period may be of the order of 300 to 400 picoseconds, suggesting that a maximum clock rate of 2.5 GHz is possible, although in practice other circuit limitations are likely to restrict the maximum clock rate to around 1 GHz.

Thus, compared with the Figure 4 circuitry, it can be seen that the same speed performance is obtained but with a jitter performance as good as if the delay element 28 were not present at all.

It will be appreciated in the Figure 6 circuitry that the first NAND gate 38 and the first driver 42 have the same construction as the second NAND gate 40

and the second driver 44. Accordingly, the combined propagation time of the first NAND gate 38 and the first driver 42 is substantially equal to the combined propagation time of the second NAND gate 40 and the second driver 44. This ensures that the delay in the clock path between the delay element 28 and the first latch 26 is substantially in balance with the delay in the clock path between the delay element 28 and the second latch 32. This in turn ensures that the second latch is reliably in the holding state by the time the first latch undergoes its output transitions.

In the Figure 6 circuitry, the second latch 26 is transparent whilst the global and local decoders 22 and 24 are transitioning, but is non-transparent when the output of the first latch 26 is transitioning. In this way, no current flows from the digital-section power supply to the latch-section power supply when the output of the first latch transitions, other than parasitic currents from the global and local decoders 22 and 24. In the Figure 4 circuitry, in comparison, the input stage of the cell latch 26 was transparent during the local decoder transitions, causing currents to flow between the digital section and latch section power supplies, and inevitably causing clock jitter. In the Figure 6 circuitry, during the transparent phase of the second latch 32, any parasitic currents flowing from the digital section have a direct path to the analog section. However, during this period there are no transitions of the first latch 26, and the second latch can be adapted to attenuate any parasitic currents (as explained below with reference to Figure 8) before such parasitic currents get onto the power supply of the analog section.

Figure 8 shows in more detail parts of the Figure 6 circuitry in the latch section.

The second latch 32 comprises a first pair of

inverters 52 and 54 connected respectively to receive the clocked thermometer signals TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  from the digital section, and a second pair of inverters 56 and 58 connected respectively to the outputs of the  
5 inverters 52 and 54 of the first pair via respective electronic switches (transfer gates) 60 and 62.

The output of each of the inverters 56 and 58 of the second pair is cross-coupled via a further electronic switch 64 or 66 to the input of the other  
10 inverter 58 or 56 of the second pair. The outputs of the second-pair inverters 56 and 58 provide respectively the thermometer signals TS and  $\overline{\text{TS}}$  for application to the current switch 30 in the analog section.

The switches 60, 62, 64 and 66 are controlled by  
15 the signals CLK3 and  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  produced by the second driver 44. The switches 60 and 62 between the first pair of inverters and the second pair of inverters are conductive when the CLK3 signal has the high level and are otherwise non-conductive. The switches 64 and 66  
20 cross-coupling the inverters 56 and 58 of the second pair are conductive when the  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  signal is at the high level and are non-conductive otherwise.

In the Figure 8 embodiment, the second driver 44 shown in Figure 6 is connected to the latch-section  
25 circuitry of the particular cell via a local clock buffer 70 which comprises respective inverters 72 and 74. The inverter 72 receives an inverted basic clock signal  $\overline{\text{BCLK}}$  produced by the second driver 44 and inverts it to produce the CLK3 signal. The inverter 74  
30 receives a non-inverted basic clock signal BCLK from the second driver 44 and inverts it to produce the  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  signal. The BCLK and  $\overline{\text{BCLK}}$  signals produced by the second driver 44 constitute mutually-complementary basic clock signals supplied in common to all of the  
35 cells of the DAC. Thus, the clock generating circuitry 34 in Figure 6 serves as a global clock generator for

supplying the basic clock signals in common to all cells. The local clock buffer 70 in each cell receives the basic clock signals and buffers them to produce mutually-complementary local clock signals CLK3 and CLK3 for its particular cell. The use of such a local clock buffer is a further measure to reduce jitter on the CLK3 and CLK3 clock signals, as described in more detail in our co-pending United Kingdom Patent Application No. 9804587.5.

Incidentally, although not shown in Figure 8, in this embodiment a further local clock buffer, of the same construction as the clock buffer 70, is provided between the first driver 42 (part of the global clock generator) and the first latch 26 of each cell. This balances the respective delays in the two clock paths between the delay element 28 and the first and second latches 26 and 32 respectively.

A further measure taken in the Figure 8 latch-section circuitry for an individual cell is to provide a power supply decoupling circuit 80 that is connected via respective bond wires 82 and 84 (shown schematically as inductors) to the latch section positive supply (LATCH VDD) and the latch-section ground (LATCH GND). The power supply decoupling circuit 80 comprises a P-type transistor 86 connected between the positive bond wire 82 and an internal power supply line CELL VDD of the cell. The gate of this P-type transistor 86 is connected to the negative bond wire 84 so as to be maintained permanently at the LATCH GND potential.

The power supply decoupling circuit 80 further comprises an N-type transistor 88 connected between the negative bond wire 84 and an internal ground supply line CELL GND of the cell. The gate of the N-type transistor 88 is connected to the positive bond wire 82 so that it is maintained permanently at the LATCH VDD

potential. A capacitor 90 is connected between the internal power supply lines CELL VDD and CELL GND.

5 The inverters 56 and 58 in the second latch 32 and the inverters 72 and 74 in the second driver 44 are powered by the internal power supply lines CELL VDD and CELL GND. The inverters 52 and 54 in the second latch 32 are powered from DIGITAL VDD and DIGITAL GND directly.

10 Operation of the Figure 8 latch-section circuitry will now be described. The transistors 86 and 88 in the power supply decoupling circuit 80 are maintained in the ON condition permanently and serve as respective resistance elements whose resistance varies in accordance with power supply fluctuations. Operation  
15 of the power supply decoupling circuit 80 is described in more detail in our co-pending United Kingdom Patent Application No. 9804587.5.

As mentioned previously, the second latch 32 has a transparent phase and a holding phase. In the  
20 transparent phase, the clock signals CLK3 and  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  are high level and low level respectively. In this state, the switches 60 and 62 are turned on so that the output signals TS and  $\overline{\text{TS}}$  follow the input signals TCK and  $\overline{\text{TCK}}$  respectively. At the end of the transparent phase, the  
25 clock signals CLK3 and  $\overline{\text{CLK3}}$  change to low level and high level respectively. At this time, the switches 60 and 62 turn off and the switches 64 and 66 turn on. At this time, the outputs of the inverters 56 and 58 are locked in whatever state they were in when the switches  
30 60 and 62 turned off.

It will be appreciated that, because in the Figure 8 circuit the second latch 32 can be implemented as a half latch, the number of transistors supplied by the latch-section power supply is approximately halved  
35 compared to the Figure 4 circuitry in which a full latch was employed, reducing the currents injected into



the latch-section power supply. The use of such a half latch is possible because the first latch 26 in the digital section does not change its outputs during the transparent phase. As mentioned previously, during the transparent phase any parasitic currents flowing from the digital section have a direct path to the analog section. Any such parasitic current will, however, be attenuated by the first pair of inverters 52 and 54 in the third latch, preventing them from reaching the analog section 30.

A number of variations are possible on the embodiment described above with reference to Figures 6 to 8. Each of the first, second and input latches can be of the transparent type as opposed to being of the edge-triggered type. It is also not necessary that any edge-triggered latch be triggered on the positive edge. A mixture of positive and negative edge-triggered devices can be employed. Furthermore, any suitable designs of half latch (clocked flip-flop such as SR-type) or full latch (D-type flip-flop or JK flip-flop) can be used. The full latches can be of the master-slave type.

It is also not essential for the power supply decoupling circuit 80 to be provided for each cell. Nor is it necessary for there to be a local clock buffer in each cell. The second driver 44 could be connected in common to all cells.

Although Figure 6 shows latch elements 26 and 32 in the digital circuitry connected to the analog circuitry, this is not essential. Any type of clocked element can be used so long as it is capable of receiving at least one digital signal and outputting at least one digital signal derived from the received digital signal(s) such that the timing of application of the output digital signal(s) to the next stage is controlled by a clock signal. The received and output

digital signals need not be equal in number. For example, the clocked element could have a combinatorial logic function for combining two or more received digital signals to produce one output digital signal.

5 Nor need it necessarily be the case that the final digital signals in the different cells be applied simultaneously to the different analog-circuitry inputs. In some situations a staggered application of the final digital signals might be required, the times  
10 when the different final digital signals are applied to their respective inputs nonetheless requiring careful control.

Figure 9 shows parts of an exemplary analog circuit AC of one cell of the Figure 3 circuitry. The  
15 analog circuit AC comprises a constant-current source 90 and a differential switching circuit 100. The differential switching circuit 100 comprises first and second PMOS field-effect-transistors (FETs) S1 and S2. The respective sources of the transistors S1 and S2 are  
20 connected to a common node CN to which the current source 90 is also connected. The respective drains of the transistors S1 and S2 are connected to respective first and second summing output terminals OUTA and OUTB of the circuit. In this embodiment, the output  
25 terminals OUTA of all cells are connected together and the respective output terminals OUTB of the cells are connected together.

Each transistor S1 and S2 has a corresponding driver circuit 106<sub>1</sub> and 106<sub>2</sub> connected to its gate.  
30 The thermometer signals TS and  $\overline{TS}$  produced by the second latch 32 of the cell (Figure 6) are applied respectively to inputs of the driver circuits 106<sub>1</sub> and 106<sub>2</sub>. Each driver circuit buffers and inverts its received input signal TS or  $\overline{TS}$  to produce a switching  
35 signal SW1 or SW2 for its associated transistor S1 or S2 such that, in the steady-state condition, one of the

transistors S1 and S2 is on and the other is off. For example, as indicated in Figure 2 itself, when the input signal TS has the high level (H) and the input signal  $\overline{TS}$  as the low level (L), the switching signal SW1 (gate drive voltage) for the transistor S1 is at the low level L causing that transistor be ON, whereas the switching signal SW2 (gate drive voltage) for the transistor S2 is at the high level H, causing that transistor to be OFF. Thus, in this condition, all of the current I flowing into the common node CN is passed to the first output terminal OUTA and no current passes to the second output terminal OUTB.

When the input signals TS and  $\overline{TS}$  undergo complementary changes from the state shown in Figure 9, the transistor S1 turns OFF at the same time that the transistor S2 turns ON.

It will be appreciated that many other designs of analog circuit can be used. For example, other differential switching circuits are described in our copending United Kingdom Patent Application No. 9800387.4, and other cell arrays for use in DAC ICs and other mixed-signal ICs are described in our copending United Kingdom patent application no. 9800367.6.

It is not necessary to use two clock distribution lines to distribute mutually-complementary basic clock signals BCLK and  $\overline{BCLK}$  to the buffer circuits; a single clock distribution line can be used. However, the use of two clock distribution lines has the advantage that the clock distribution lines undergo complementary changes so that the substrate (to which the two clock distribution lines are capacitatively coupled) is affected less by clock-signal changes.

It will be understood by those skilled in the art that it is not necessary for the second latch 32 in every cell to be provided with its own buffer circuit 70 as in Figure 8. For example, it would be possible

for two or more second latches (e.g. the second latches in adjacent cells) to share the same buffer circuit 70, enabling the total number of buffer circuits to be reduced. In this case, however, some data-dependent jitter will inevitably remain. For example, there will be some input-word changes which result in the second latches in both the adjacent cells changing state (high loading), and other input-word changes for which only one or none of them changes state (medium or low loading). Because of these different loading possibilities amongst latches that share a common buffer circuit, jitter will exist.

It is not necessary for the different cells to have respective clock buffer circuits. It is also not necessary to provide each cell with its own individual power supply decoupling circuit 80 for the second latch 32 and clock buffer 70 of the cell. Several cells could share the same power supply decoupling circuit, or the power supply decoupling circuits could be omitted altogether. When two or more cells share the same clock buffer circuit (a further possibility mentioned above) a unit for power supply purposes could be formed by the second latches 32 of those two or more cells together with the common buffer circuit which applies clock signals to those latches.

It is not essential in any of the foregoing embodiments that the digital circuitry (10 in Figure 3) produces thermometer-coded signals. The analog circuits could, for example, be selected individually in accordance with the digital signals produced by the digital circuitry, rather than combinatorially as in the case in which thermometer-coded signals are used. Thus, the digital signals produced by the digital circuitry could be mutually-exclusive selection signals.

It is not essential to supply power independently

to the different circuitry sections (digital, latch and analog). A common power supply can be used for all sections, if desired.

5 The measures described in relation to the foregoing embodiments are applicable in any situation in which a timing-sensitive circuit (particularly an analog circuit) must be capable of undergoing a predetermined operation at a well-defined instant in time. When plural such timing-sensitive circuits are  
10 required, the foregoing embodiments can enable them to undergo respective predetermined operations at a single well-defined instant in time or even at respective staggered (but well-defined) instants in time.

**CLAIMS:**

1. Digital circuitry, operative repetitively to perform a series of processing cycles, comprising:

input signal processing means operable in each  
5 cycle to perform a predetermined processing operation on one or more input signals received by the circuitry to derive therefrom one or more first signals, the said predetermined processing operation being commenced in response to a first clock signal;

10 first clocked means switchable, by application thereto of a second clock signal, between a responsive state, in which the first clocked means are operable in response to a change in the first signal(s) to change one or more second signals produced thereby, and a non-  
15 responsive state in which no change in the second signal(s) occurs;

second clocked means switchable, by application thereto of a third clock signal, between a responsive state, in which the second clocked means are operable  
20 in response to a change in the second signal(s) to change one or more output signals of the circuitry, and a non-responsive state in which no change in the output signal(s) occurs; and

clock generating means for deriving the second and  
25 third clock signals from the first clock signal, the second clock signal being delayed relative to the first clock signal by a preselected delay time and the said third clock signal being delayed relative to the first clock signal by less than the said preselected delay  
30 time such that in each cycle the first clocked means enter the said non-responsive state before the end of the said predetermined processing operation, and the said second clocked means enter the said responsive state when the first clocked means are in the said non-  
35 responsive state.

2. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 1,

wherein the said third clock signal has no or no substantial delay relative to the said first clock signal.

3. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 1 or 2,  
5 wherein the said preselected delay time is chosen such that the said first clocked means enter the said non-responsive state at least a predetermined hold time before the end of the said predetermined processing operation, which predetermined hold time is the minimum  
10 period for which the or each first signal must remain stable after the first clocked means enter the said non-responsive state.

4. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the said clock generating means are such  
15 that a predetermined enabling change in the said third clock signal, which change causes the second clocked means to change from the said non-responsive state to the said responsive state, occurs substantially simultaneously with one of the changes in the said  
20 first clock signal.

5. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 4,  
wherein the said one change in the first clock signal is a predetermined enabling change in that signal which causes the said predetermined processing operation to  
25 commence.

6. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 4 or 5,  
wherein a predetermined disabling change in the third clock signal, which change causes the second clocked means to change from the said responsive state to the  
30 said non-responsive state, is delayed substantially relative to one of the changes in the first clock signal.

7. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 6,  
wherein the clock generating means include:

35 delay means for delaying the first clock signal to produce a delayed version thereof; and

logic means for logically combining the first clock signal with the said delayed version thereof such that the said enabling change in the third clock signal is substantially simultaneous with the said enabling change in the said first clock signal, and the said disabling change in the third clock signal is substantially simultaneous with one of the changes in the said delayed version of the first clock signal.

8. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 7, wherein the said clock generating means further include delay balancing means connected between the said delay means and the said first clocked means for receiving the said delayed version of the first clock signal and for deriving therefrom the said second clock signal, the delay balancing means having a first propagation delay between the said one change in the delayed version of the first clock signal and a predetermined enabling change in the said second clock signal that causes the first clocked means to change from the said non-responsive state to the said responsive state, the said first propagation delay being substantially equal to a second propagation delay, of the said logic means, between the said one change in the said delayed version and the said disabling change in the third clock signal.

9. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the said input signal processing means include further clocked means switchable, by application thereto of the said first clock signal, between a responsive state, in which the said further clocked means are operable in response to a change in the said input signal(s) to change one or more basic signals produced thereby, and a non-responsive state in which no change in the basic signal(s) occurs; and signal processing means for deriving the said one or more first signals from the basic signal(s) . . . . .



10. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the said first clocked means include a D-type latch element.

5 11. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the said second clocked means include a transparent half latch element.

10 12. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the said first signals and/or the said second signals and/or the said third signals and/or the said output signals are complementary signal pairs.

15 13. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the or each first signal and/or the or each second signal and/or the or each third signal and/or the or each output signal is a thermometer-coded signal.

20 14. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, further including power supply means for supplying power to the said second clocked means independently from that supplied to at least another part of the said digital circuitry.

25 15. Digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim, including a plurality of individual circuit units, each circuit unit including such input signal processing means and such first clocked means and such second clocked means.

16. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 15, wherein the clock generating means include:

30 a global clock generator provided in common for all the said circuit units and operable to produce a basic clock signal; and

35 a plurality of local clock drivers, each corresponding to one or more of the said circuit units, and each being connected to the global clock generator for receiving therefrom the said basic clock signal and being operable to derive therefrom a unique such third clock signal for application to the said second clocked

means in the or each of its said one or more corresponding circuit units.

17. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 16, wherein each said circuit unit has its own  
5 individually-corresponding one of the said local clock drivers.

18. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 16 or 17, wherein the said global clock generator is operable to produce respective mutually-complementary such basic  
10 clock signals which are applied in common to all of the said local clock drivers of the said plurality.

19. Digital circuitry as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 18, further comprising power supply decoupling means for decoupling from one another the  
15 respective power supplies of respective predetermined parts of at least two different circuit units of the said plurality.

20. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 19, wherein the said power supply decoupling means are  
20 operable to decouple the power supply of such a predetermined part of each said circuit unit from that of each other one of the circuit units.

21. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 19 or 20, wherein the said predetermined part of the said  
25 circuit unit includes the said second clocked means.

22. Digital circuitry as claimed in claim 21 when read as appended to claim 17, wherein the said  
predetermined part of the said circuit unit further includes the said local clock driver of the circuit  
30 unit.

23. Mixed-signal circuitry including:

digital circuitry as claimed in any preceding claim; and

analog circuitry connected to the said digital  
35 circuitry for receiving therefrom the said one or more output signals and operable to produce one or more

analog signals in dependence upon the received output signal(s).

24. Mixed-signal circuitry as claimed in claim 23, including a digital-to-analog converter.

5        25. Mixed-signal circuitry as claimed in claim 23 or 24, wherein the analog circuitry includes a plurality of current sources or current sinks and a plurality of switch circuits connected to the current sources/sinks for performing predetermined switching  
10 operations in dependence upon the said output signal(s) so as to produce the said one or more analog signals.

26. Mixed-signal circuitry as claimed in any one of claims 23 to 25, including digital circuitry as  
15 claimed in claim 14, wherein the said power supply means are also operable to supply power to the said analog circuitry independently of the power supplied to the or each said second clocked means and to the said other part of the digital circuitry.

27. Digital circuitry substantially as  
20 hereinbefore described with reference to any one of the Figures 4 to 8 of the accompanying drawings.

28. Mixed-signal circuitry substantially as  
hereinbefore described with reference to any one of  
Figures 4 to 9 of the accompanying drawings.

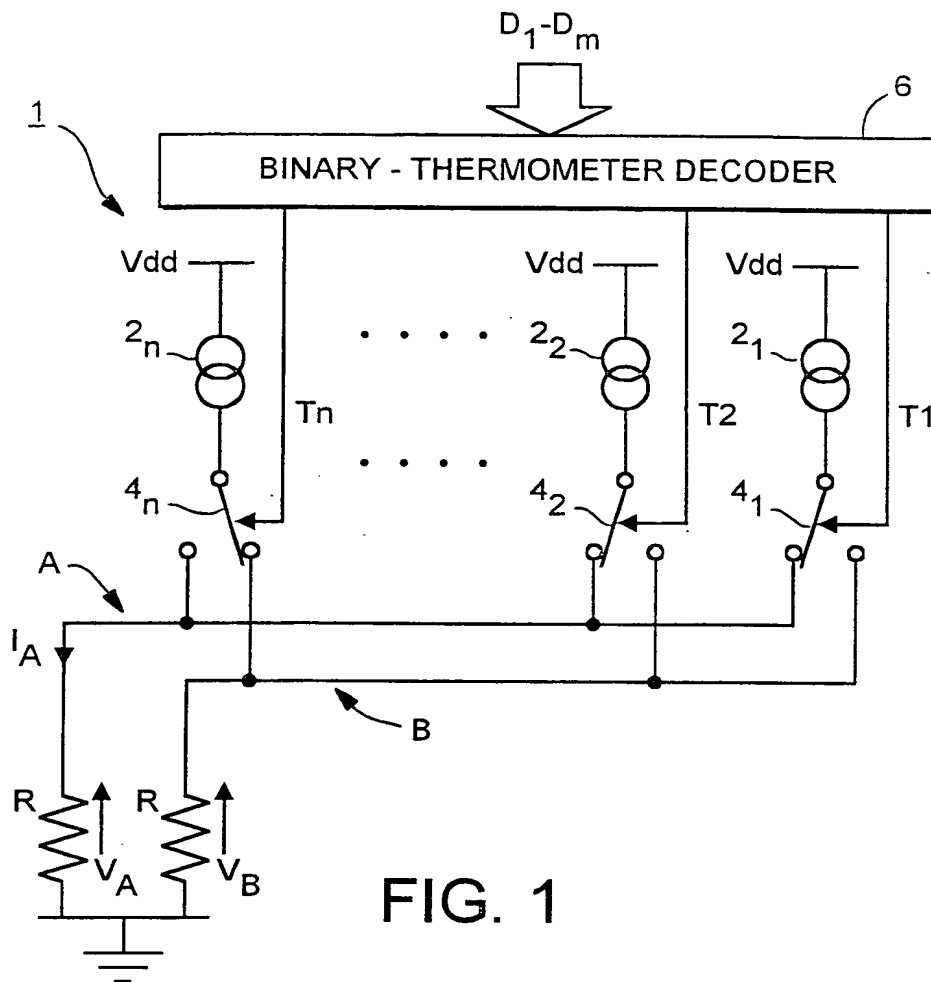
25

ABSTRACT

JITTER REDUCTION

Digital circuitry, for use for example in a mixed-signal device such as a digital-to-analog converter, has decoders (22, 24) which process a digital input word ( $D_1 \sim D_m$ ) to derive thermometer-coded signals ( $T, \bar{T}$ ) for controlling one cell of an array of cells in the device. The decoders commence operation at the rising edge of a first clock signal (DIGCLK). Each cell has a first, D-type latch (26) clocked by a second clock signal (CLK2) that is delayed by a preselected delay time  $\Delta_1$  relative to the first clock signal, and a second, transparent latch (32) clocked by a third clock signal (CLK3) whose rising edge coincides with the rising edge of the first clock signal and whose falling edge coincides with the rising edge of the second clock signal. The rising edge of the third clock signal is not affected by jitter associated with a delay element (28) used to delay the first clock signal by  $\Delta_1$ . The falling edge is affected by such jitter, so outputs ( $TCK, \overline{TCK}$ ) of the first latch have jitter at the falling edge, but this is prevented from feeding through to final outputs ( $TS, \overline{TS}$ ) of the circuitry because the second latch is non-transparent at that falling edge.

[Fig. 6]



BINARY INPUT WORD			THERMOMETER-CODED SIGNALS						
D3	D2	D1	T7	T6	T5	T4	T3	T2	T1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

FIG. 2

**This Page Blank (uspto)**

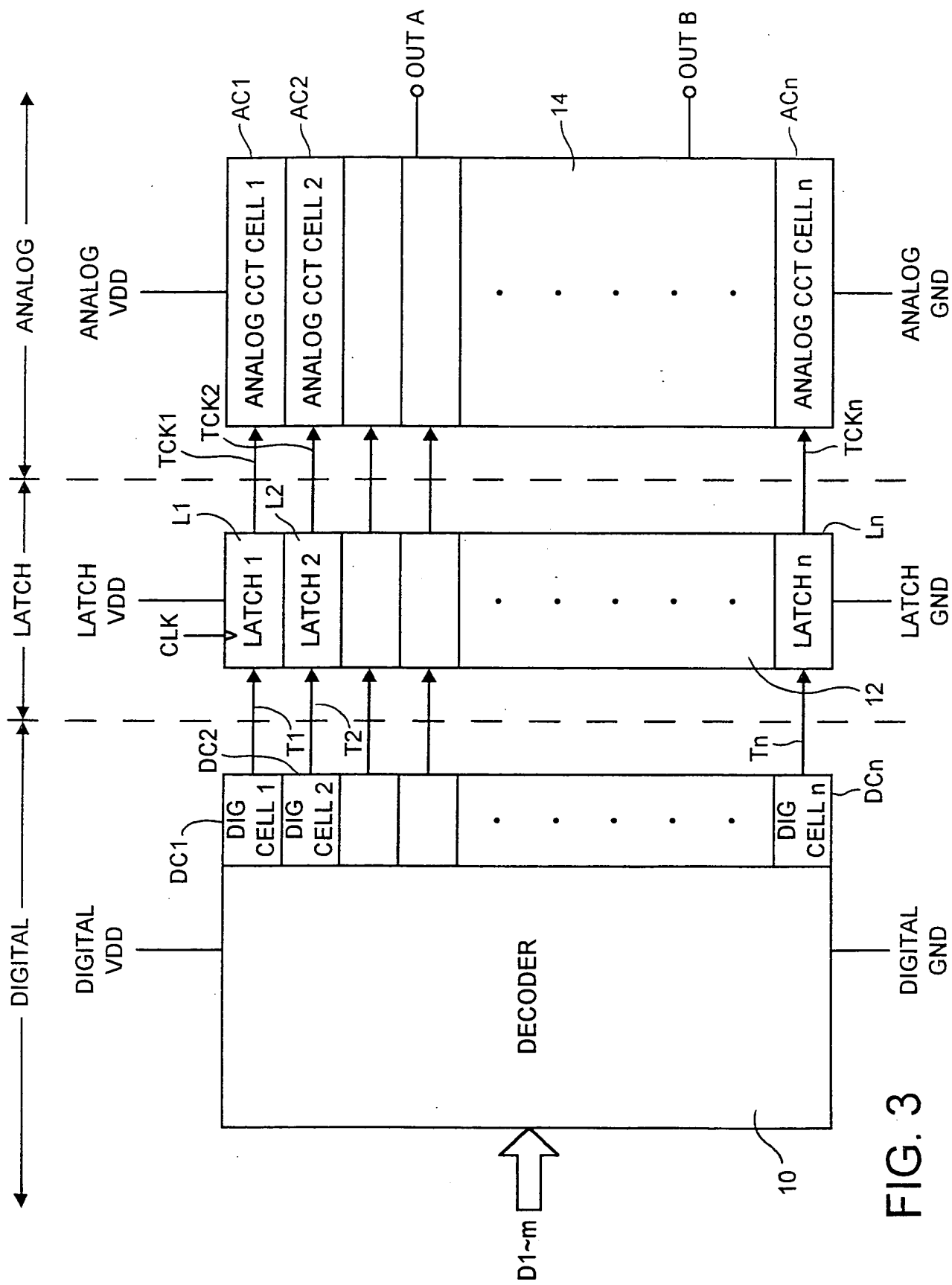


FIG. 3



***This Page Blank (uspto)***



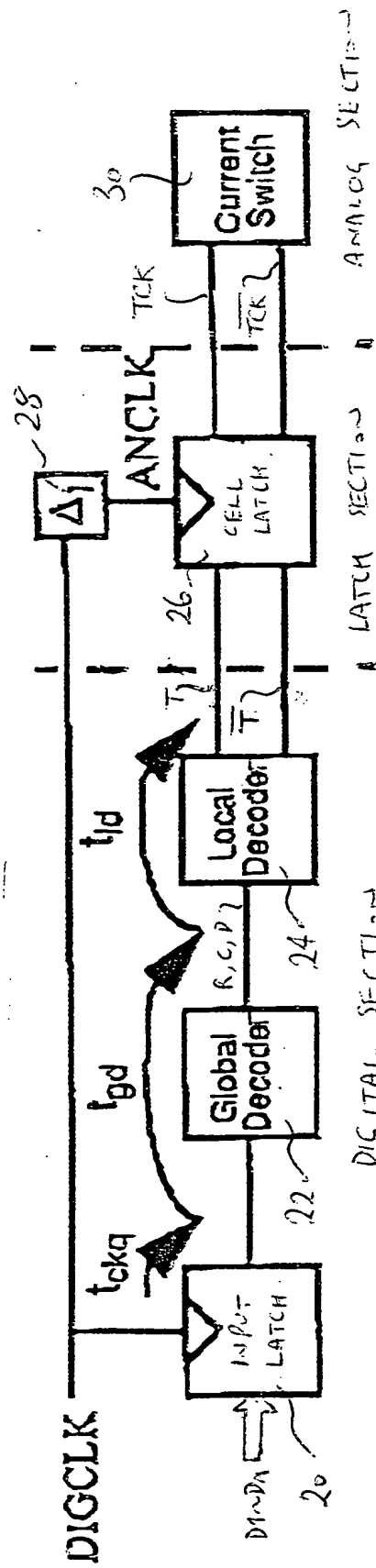


FIGURE 4

**This Page Blank (uspto)**

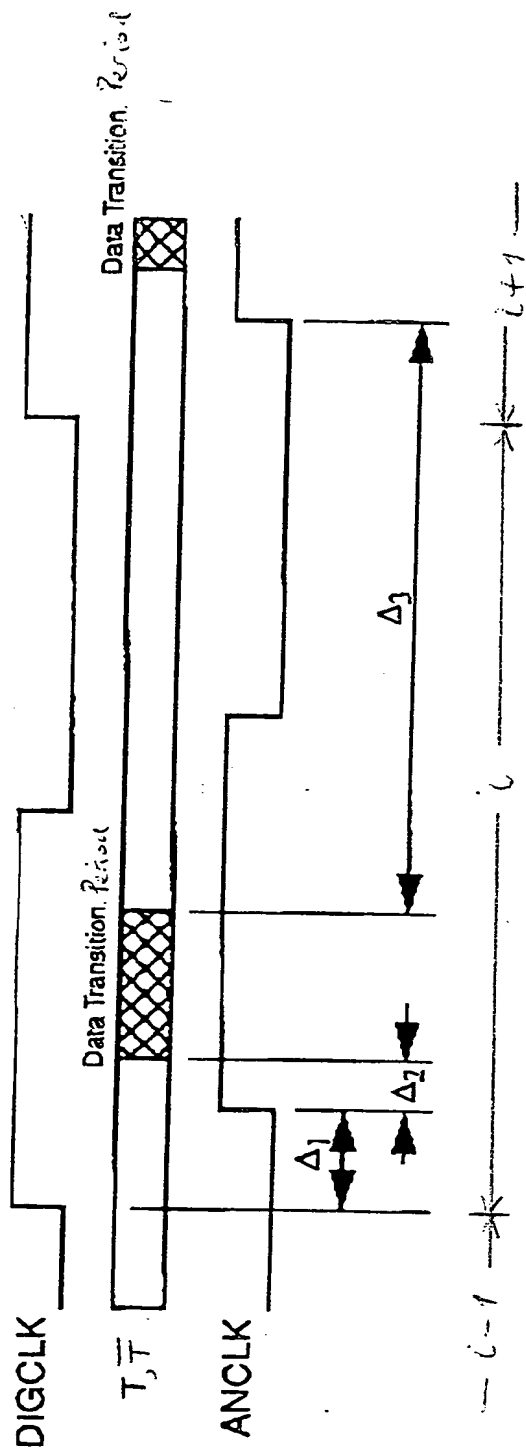


FIGURE 5A

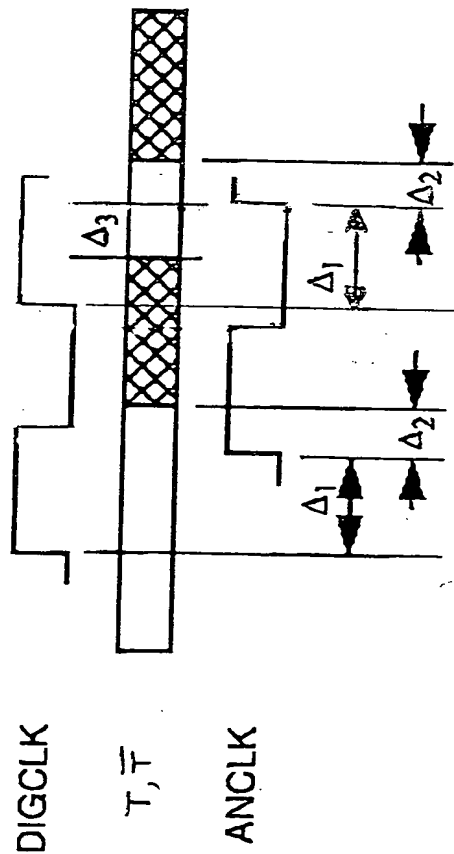


FIGURE 5B

**This Page Blank (uspto)**

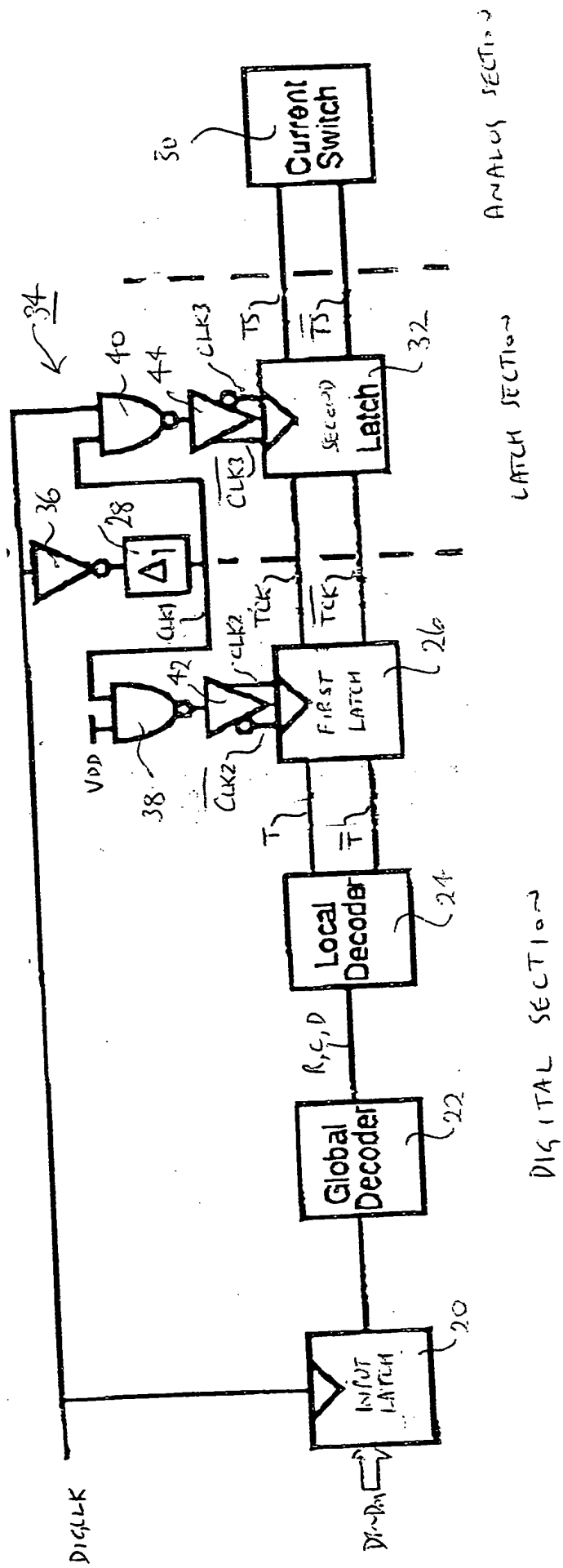


FIGURE 6

*This Page Blank (uspto)*

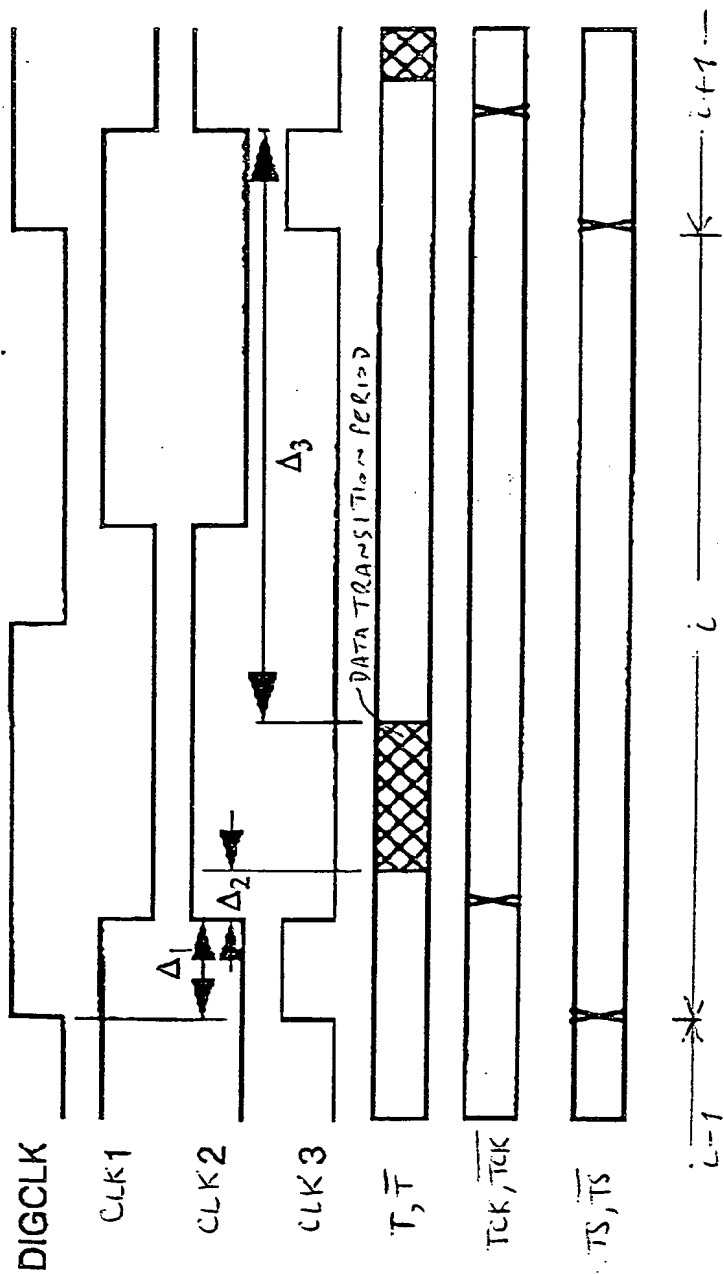


FIGURE 7A

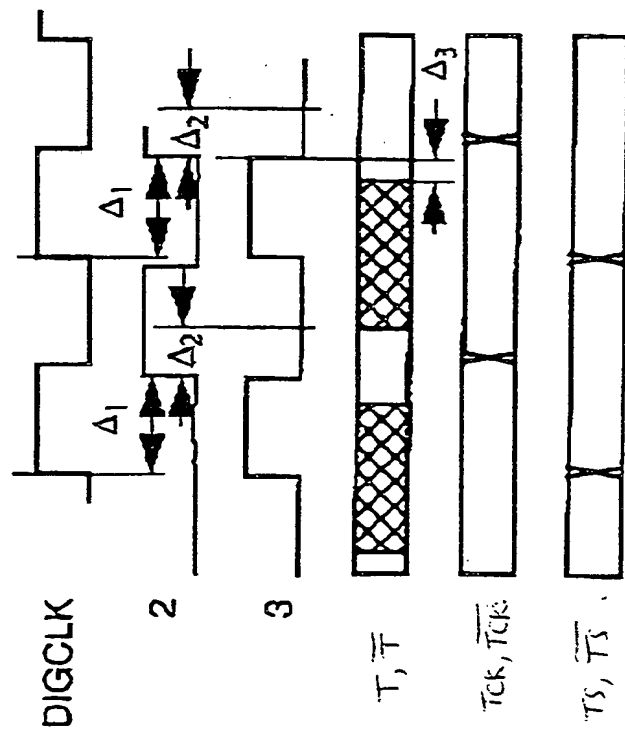


FIGURE 7B

**This Page Blank (uspto)**



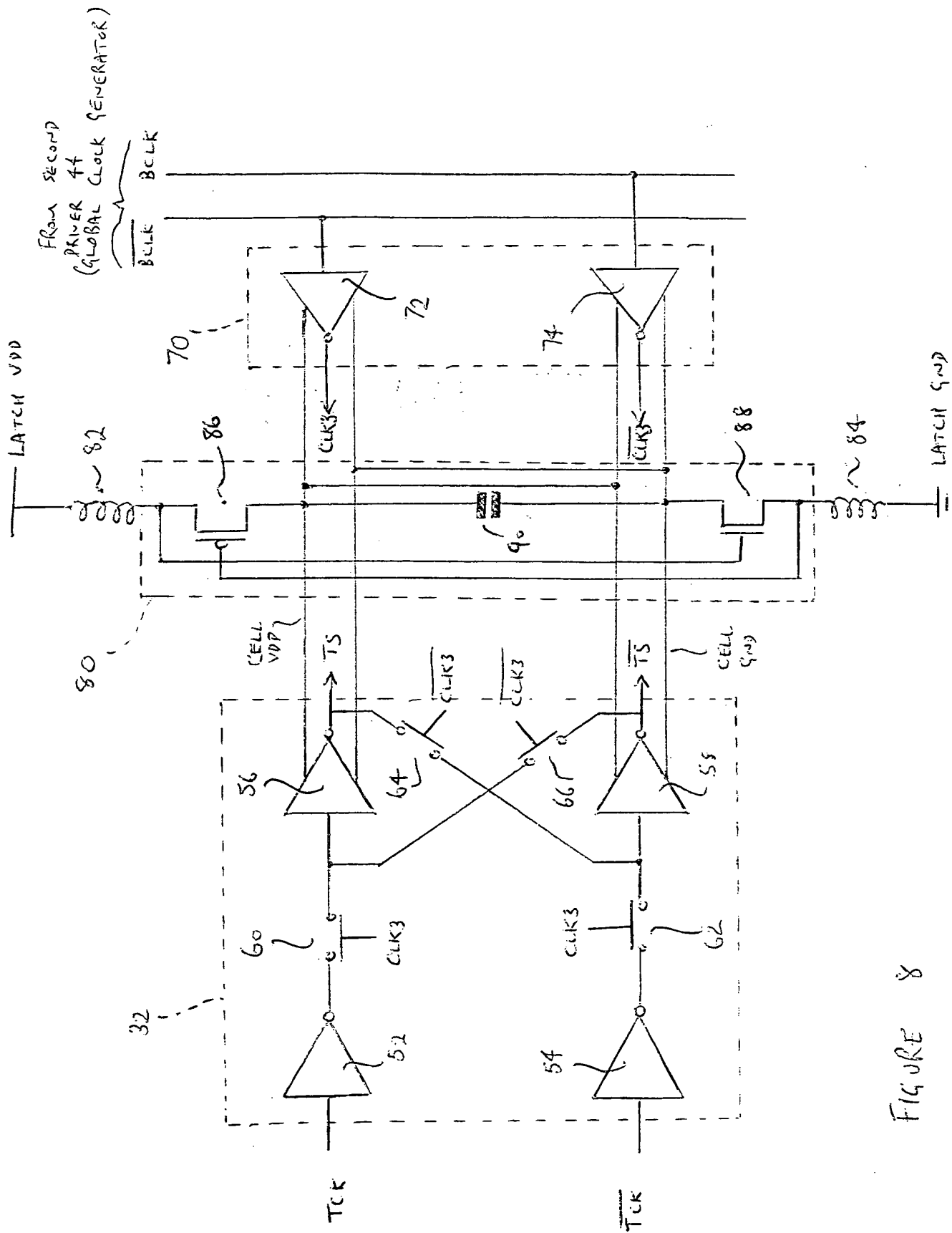


FIGURE 8

**This Page Blank (uspto)**

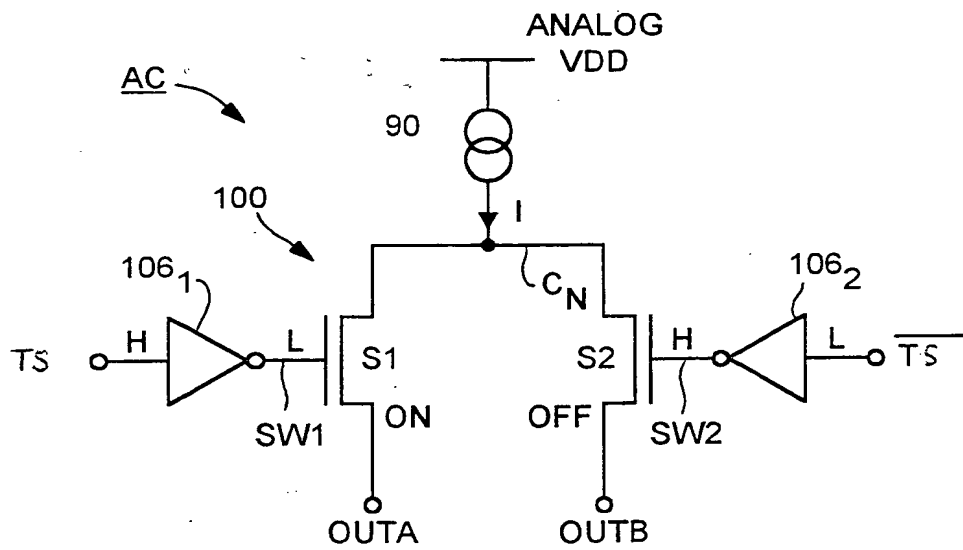


FIG. 9

this page Blank (uspto)